

School of Theology at Claremont



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# HIGH-MARK CONGREGATIONS

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# HIGH-MARK CONGREGATIONS

BY  
HENRY GURTING

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# **HIGH-MARK CONGREGATIONS**





# High-Mark Congregations

## CHAPTER I

### *Introduction*

THIS little book is the story, and the explanation of the philosophy, of a means and method — wholly becoming and unsensational — by which much increased church attendance was secured, maintained, and ever further increased in a steady growth from the first. This combination of an increase, and its maintenance, and a continuing increase, and by a means or method fitting the dignity of the interest in which it is employed — stamping the principle underlying the effort as sound — may offer some suggestions to church workers in a time when the maintenance of church attendance is no small problem.

This plan is offered with no thought that it can be a panacea for the diseases

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that afflict the church. These are fairly radical disorders, requiring constitutional and more heroic treatment. This is simply the account of an actual, and steadily maintained increase in a church's congregations, in a nowise specially favorable community. The validity of the principle is claimed, and that it is widely adaptable. It is intended to make only modest claims for the plan. It has given us something more than twenty-five per cent. increase over our previous seasonal or four months' average, since we began its use. The general activity of the church also has been in proportion as a result. The financial gain, both for parish expenses and for benevolent objects, has been noteworthy. But while not revolutionary, as much increase as this is considerable, especially as it is enduring and still continuing, the principle involved valid, free from reacting weakness, and generally adaptable. All these are claimed.

With the feeling that some other,

weighted with the problems and the cares of his ministry, may find this experience suggestive for his own work, I am offering what has been approved by the judgment of friends, as well as by the results gained, for the consideration of a wider public.

## CHAPTER II

### *Larger Congregations the Need of the Church*

THE background of the experience here narrated was a church in a great community of well-meaning and respectable people, with a relatively small congregation. Something over eleven hundred persons were counted within the spiritual care of the church. There were three hundred and ten resident church-members. Three hundred pupils were enrolled in the Sunday-school. But our morning congregations were averaging no more than one hundred and thirty, the evening congregations as few as forty in a vestry service, and made up almost without exception from the morning congregation. The attendance of pupils from our large Sunday-school,

under twenty years of age, averaged no more than twenty-five.

The community is considered quite above the average for the smaller cities of New England, in respect to morals, education, and wealth. The congregation of this church was as large relatively as the congregations of the other churches of the city, and doubtless as large relatively as the congregations of the other churches of the State. The present pastorate had continued for more than six years; the people of the church and community were united in their loyalty to their minister; no smaller congregations prevailed than for the years before his pastorate. But the congregations had not increased by the commonly employed means during his ministry. Church-going seemed not to come within the interests of the people. Not that they did not believe in the church, but that they were indifferent to it. There was scant conscience in regard to church attendance, and little public expectation

regarding it. Many of the most esteemed people and their families seldom attended the worship of the church. Yet many such persons contributed to the church's support. Their children were in the Sunday-school; their families received pastoral care; these very men would time and again acknowledge to the pastor that they ought to attend the church services.

A more or less general, if it be a slight, decline in church attendance is evident. Compared not with what has been, but with the great numbers who do not attend, it would appear that the church has a great world to conquer, even though it be not admitted that it has been on the retreat.

But the church has not held its own in this particular. Other interests, some of them rivals of the church, flourish. Commerce is a passion. Education is a popular interest. Theaters, against the handicap of a charged admission, not inconsiderable, flourish. The Sunday

newspaper is a formidable institution with an ever-increasing number of readers. Pleasure and work make steady encroachments upon Sunday. By subtile propaganda these and other interests are forced upon people's attention, and the worship of the church — counter claim for it not being made on the same scale and with the same persistence — is crowded out of the place where things are seriously considered. A new generation, schooled under the persuasions of constant and subtile appeal, is growing up in an atmosphere of religious indifference, with ideals not inclusive of church attendance. Few children are church attendants, parents, for most part, contenting themselves for their children, with the benefits derived from the Sunday-school. It must be apparent, however, to anyone who observes, that attendance at the Sunday-school does not generally lead to church attendance, and that this emphasis is prophecy of a coming generation of non-church-goers.

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And yet the church has what no one of its competitors has — a great background in conscience, and in belief in the supreme worth of the church. This is its vast heritage from centuries of faith and life. Foundation is already laid here as it is laid in the home and in government and in commerce and in law. To worship God has been a great and honored expectation. No one, great or small, speaks against it. A way has been cleared for it among other interests by specially favoring privileges and laws. The church is established by right of many years of honored service, and by its very inherent worth and weight. Legitimately the church has no close competitor; it has behind it the *ought* which no other interest can well claim.

But even this position, without some defense or aggression, cannot be held forever. And without doubt the former bulwark which made the church a mighty surety is now assailed. But the assault is not yet against the principle; the state



of things is no worse than indifference. Much of the strength of the principle, as native conviction concerning its worth, remains. The ideals of the church are impressed on the conscience, and live in the approvals of the people. The church has truth on its side. It has a gospel of love and of hope. It has the authority of reason and conscience. It has that against which the gates of hell may not prevail. The gospel of the church does meet the deep needs of man and is as near the human heart as its hope.

With so much in favor — with a cause so good, with conscience and ideals in alliance — there is needed but an open way to the attention of men, that the facts — always secure and mighty — may make their rightful impression. The conscience yields almost the moment it is besieged. Even if the will holds out, this refuge of excuses and lies is insecure. If only these people were made to consider — made with some-

thing of the skill and constancy with which they are enticed to rival interests to consider — it could not but be that they would come out of that far country which is so often not other than forgetfulness of God.

But ordinarily the church accepts the congregations which, without persuasion thereto, attend the church services. These people may find ample grounds for maintaining a more or less regular attendance. The services are attractive and rewarding, and faithfulness thereto is brought home with satisfying assurance by the sense of oneness with God. But there is little concern to carry conviction of the duty of church attendance to all the latent approving and to all the need outside. The minister himself may have no passionate conviction of the worth of worship. But it is more likely that he has his days and nights of lamenting that the church, which should count for so much, should be so lightly taken, and that his own life, so full of

desire to serve, should be slipping away without that great ennobling, the hope of accomplishing which has made the ministry so attractive.

Yet really, from the great numbers — more neglectful than hostile — who for want of hearing persuasion settle down into confirmed indifference, — formidable only because it is unchallenged — by some wise effort, it would be comparatively easy to recruit the congregation. If it were not easy, it would yet be worth while to make the attempt, since the interest is paramount and the duty primary. And the church is not called to ease.

There are, of course, efforts to gain the masses to the church. There are the Sunday-school, and men's clubs, and pastoral visitation, and special services and the social life of the church — all approved by use. No one of these has a substitute. But for the most part — and compared with an aggression commensurate with the interest — the church

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is like that long-established business-house whose open door and sign are its only persuasion in this enterprising day. Of course it has its patrons — loyal friends whose grandparents bought and sold here when the city was young; the friends of these to whom the house has been recommended, and those others who know the reputation of the firm for entire reliability and courtesy, and those others still who trade here because the social standing of the house comports with the place they affect in the community. Loyal patrons and friends they all are; but few. The store by its side, with it may be less to commend it, with its forceful and persistent advertising — by the working of a law almost certain — from the increasing population, draws many times the number of patrons. Its very basal department is that of appeal and persuasion. Its next to primary aim is to make new patrons. Its policy differs from its ancient neighbor's in that it keeps reminding the public of

what it has to sell, of its prices, of the reputation it is determined to merit; and getting thus the attention of the buying public, — by the operation of that law of which all advertising and publicity is the recognition — new customers are constantly made. Its announcements and persuasions meet the people in their homes, in the cars, on the streets; and by sheer persistence, a first indifference or even a first prejudice, is overcome.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Effective Principle Recognized*

**A**DVERTISING — a particular kind of public appeal suited to the particular end in view — is, as a matter of fact, the life of business. It is simply a way of presenting facts, gaining atten-  
tion, and making an appeal. It forces upon the mind what would otherwise escape and what, once there, enters into the actions of life. It convinces, persuades. It enters through attention, and attention is the highway to action.

A suitable adaptation of this general principle, so effective and essential in business, and of which advertising itself is a suitable adaptation, appears also in the propaganda of various great causes. The temperance societies, the missionary boards, the social and charitable founda-

tions, the Peace societies, together with almost every reform and philanthropic work, have their definite propaganda. A campaign in the interest of church-going would seem to be in accord with forceful church enterprise. It would not need be other than dignified and appropriate. Its broad basis, however it be adapted, is simply that of education in the reasons which underly it and the gains to be derived from it. Its aim is the creating a conscience touching a great betterment of life. An adaptation of this effective and valid principle to this end, and the record of an experience of a church in applying it, are set forth in the following pages.

There is no place where a violation of the proprieties annuls the advantage sought, as in church work, and a prejudice against a church's entering this field and making use of persuasion to its particular end, is natural. The seeming identification of the principle solely with business gives it undesirable asso-

ciations. But newspaper advertising itself is but a special adaptation of the general principle which has its suitable adaptation in many other fields. The features most offensive by commercial associations are least essential, and fall away in the appropriate adaptation of the principle. The use of newspaper space is not contemplated; display advertising is not contemplated. Least of all is the use of hand-bills considered. One needs but to be reminded of the sensational announcement of sermon topics appearing in papers, and of the cheapest kind of dodgers sometimes distributed, and of the scrawling displayed on bill-boards on the front of churches, to understand how legitimate is the prejudice against the church's making any kind of public appeal in print. Things are dignified by a certain cost; some considerable outlay is somehow the guarantee of that fitness which we call good taste or art, and is simply the fitting way of doing a thing. It cheapens



and degrades the church to advertise its services by hand-bills and posters. Cheapness and make-shift provision speak of lack of real interest and heart more plainly than a building in poor repair. They are what tatters and misfit are in dress. They make the impression that the enterprise is not seriously believed in, — an impression anything argued for can hardly counteract.

Any adaptation of the principle in the interest of the church is under weight of prejudice also, because hitherto it has been monopolized by sensationalism. But that perversion does not destroy the validity of the principle. It only excludes one form of its adaptation and explains the prejudice. Yet even were newspaper advertising to be argued for, it might easily be shown that it could be done in such a way as to honor the interest in behalf of which it is used.

Objection to the fitting adaptation of the principle to the needs of the church is further removed when it is understood

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that so great a thing as habitual church attendance is the thing aimed at, and not the bare calling attention to specific and special services. To aim at the latter is somehow to discredit the former. The latter substitutes a special attraction for the steady doing of duty. It may be a putting an attractive speaker in place of the cross of Christ. Habitual church-going is big, has well-grounded claims in men's respect and conscience; it is great enough in its effects to justify the keeping trying to accomplish it; and to accomplish it in any man is to do him surpassing and everlasting good.

Not speaking as yet of the adaptation of the principle in the ways approved as fitting, the education in reasons and motives thus given, and the appeal thus made, afford a fulcrum all the more broad and sure that it is indirect. Unless one is content to do nothing to reach the many who do not attend church, the alternative is the somewhat ineffective one of the minister's going to such

people with invitations and arguments. That this requires a vast deal of the minister's time and that he is seldom able to get any other to do it, is not the greatest thing against it. It is not effective.

And there are good reasons why it is not. It is too immediate and too accusing and too professional. The man has been taken on ground where he has no defense and has been overpowered. And, consciously or unconsciously, he is apt to resent it. He admits all and maybe promises attendance. What else can he do? But his mind is not convinced, nor his will really turned. No impression has been made through his feelings or reason or conscience. No way has been made through his indifference over which his will can go. And the first interview failing of actual result, as in the nature of the case it is likely to do, — even if it issue in attendance for a time or two — a second reference to the matter can hardly be made, lest indifference turn

into resentment and prejudice. Every pastor time and again comes into this deadlock where he can do nothing.

The attitude of mind of the typical non-church-goer is much better appealed to otherwise. He does not have to be fundamentally persuaded. He believes in the church. He admits the duty to attend its services. But he simply does not do it. One reminder of his duty and of his neglect, however it comes, is easily ignored. Effort involving many personal reminders, from one or from many, comes to be nagging. The minister is too wise for that. But brought to this man's attention repeatedly, as is possible when done impersonally, as is the case when done in print, he becomes familiar with the idea of doing his duty. He has to give attention to the matter, and what he attends to simply gets written on the brain. The will is led by the thought. Many persons in every community wait just for that.

By such a propaganda, touching the

reasons and grounds and duty of church attendance, a general expectation that people attend church would also in due time be created. Those heretofore attending irregularly, and those growing up, would find the prevailing sentiment of the community favorable to church attendance. Whereas it once was a matter indifferent, it has now become the expectation. Thus the public opinion is enlisted on the church's side. That some stay away has power to keep others away, and that some go has power to draw others with them, so accordingly much depends upon which way the tide is running. It is difficult for a young person, say, to keep on going to the church services, if in going he has to pass a dozen houses, and from none of them anyone gives witness other than unbelief and indifference.

To arraign a man before the bar of his own conscience is one thing, but to discredit his behavior before the community is a thing often more potent. Absence

from church may be made disreputable. To marshal before the community the facts which show church-going to be a duty, is to make the public conscience active on this point. The practise of not attending church can, in this public way be so discredited that children will look upon this neglect much as they look upon the use of profanity. It is like recovering honesty and purity to a community in which these have somewhat ceased to be expected, or the lack of them not dishonorable. The means of accomplishing it is some constant and public chance to praise and blame; to set up a standard of judgment. This may not make church attendants of all, but the force of the example of those who do not go to church is gone.

This is exactly the function of the church in a community — to make a public sentiment or conscience — a conscience quick and active. Private interview and persuasion are without this added leverage. The minister counts

these persons remiss, but others do not, or they do not know that others do. But when the fact of the duty is publicly exhibited, these negligent ones feel themselves in the light. All exhortation from the pulpit fails also to reach those it is aimed at; and the minister cannot always be sounding this note. That is not what the pulpit is for. No merchant could speak of his goods to stranger or to friend with the same importunity with which he advertises. But the more he advertises, the more respect grows around his business, and a favoring sentiment is created like a mighty asset of good will.

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Principle Adapted — First*

TAKING counsel of himself in the wisely adapting the foregoing principle, of the validity of which he was persuaded, the writer was able to approve the use of neatly framed printed sentiments or texts, pithy and short, favorable to church-going. These, changed frequently, were displayed in the windows of stores and in public places. They presented so attractive an appearance that no interest could suffer discredit by association with them, and were enough different in sentiment and object from the nearest thing like them in business use, as not to come into comparison. So far as is known, no one, in a rather critical community, made unfavorable comment on that score. On the other hand many persons were



enthusiastic for the idea. Locally it has been pre-empted as a church institution, and in almost any community would stand in a character all its own.

The frames, of which, for our very compact parish, eight were thought enough, were made of inch moulding, eleven by fourteen inches, inside measure. This is a standard size for glass, and is a trifle less — to allow for trimming — than one-fourth the standard size of cardboard. The frames were of oak — genuine wood — and stained rather than veneered or painted or gilded, and plain rather than beaded or filigreed or otherwise ornamented. Mahogany or rosewood frames, in most cases, would err on the side of extravagance. The frames were fitted with a removable back of heavy cardboard, fastened in place with a five-inch-wide lengthwise strip of one-fourth-inch board, secured at the ends by one-eared metal buttons, fastened with a short stout screw to the frame. The cost entire was seventy-

five cents each and, with an occasional staining, will last for years.

Displayed on Friday morning, the framed epigrams were gathered up on Monday morning. They thus never came to be taken as a matter of course, and upon appearing always attracted attention. The sentiment was changed every time displayed. This kept them ever new, and maintained the interest. The places where they were displayed were constantly changed also, so that they were ever appearing in new places and so made a varied feature in the window. Even different shades of cardboard were used for the different sets, for most part white and sepia — that known to the trade as Warren's Cameo Plate card stock being best suited — and black and brown ink. Some of the sets were printed the narrow and some the broad way of the card for the sake of variety. Because something better was used to alternate with them, these were used only every other week. The

sentiments themselves were varied — some longer, some shorter — thrusting their suggesting or accusing or encouraging or inviting or convincing word upon the attention of the passer-by. The printer was made to vary the set-up as much as possible. Thus each display was much as if it were the first, save that people in time came to expect to see it and gave attention to it.

“In the Interest of Church-going,” set off in clear bold letters at the left-hand top of the card, frankly stated the application to be made of the sentiment following; and at the bottom, in the smallest letters on the card, the name of the church and the hours of the preaching services, made connection for any impulse that might be generated. The printing of twelve cards of each sentiment, ten sets done at one order, cost twenty-five cents a set. The cost of the cardboard was additional. Having twenty sets, the last was used so long after the first that we were able to use

them over again after we had once gone round, after the manner of advertisers with their stock advertisements. The less active texts were dropped from use and others tried instead.

The sentiments expressed by the various texts should make just the right impression in order to be effective. One can afford to put as much time upon writing these as an advertiser spends on copy for newspaper space. With him this has to justify its cost and make profit. Great tact is required here that just the right appeal be made. The sentiments, while expressing what may be unpleasant truth, dare not be too arraigning. Better take for granted people's belief in the church; better show how much men can do in the church; how their coming will induce others to come. It is much better that the sentiment expressed be positive than negative.

The following will show the general character of the sentiment, and the form of display made use of:

IN THE INTEREST OF  
CHURCH-GOING

*A man by attending church draws with him his friends and his children; gives new courage to those doing the church work, and has that satisfaction which comes to a man when he does his duty.*

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

IN THE INTEREST OF  
CHURCH-GOING

<i>Sunday Hours,</i>		24
<i>For Sleep,</i>	8	
<i>For Church,</i>	$1\frac{1}{4}$	
<i>At One's Own Disposal,</i>	$14\frac{3}{4}$	
	<u>24</u>	<u>24</u>

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

IN THE INTEREST OF  
CHURCH-GOING

*The modern Church must have the spirit  
of dignified and forceful enterprise.*

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

AN OLD ROMAN POET  
SAYS:

*"All our sorrows spring from forgetfulness of God."*

*The man who does not go to church is  
apt to forget God.*

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

IN THE INTEREST OF  
CHURCH-GOING

*There are few things that must be done on Sunday that cannot be done either before or after church.*

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

IN THE INTEREST OF  
CHURCH-GOING

*Refuse to measure Sunday by its pleasures; measure it by its privileges and duties.*

FIRST CHURCH

SUNDAY MORNING, 10.30

SUNDAY EVENING, 7.00

The power of this appeal will depend much upon the force with which the sentiment of the texts strikes home to the moral sense and conscience of the public. If the sentiments are kept on a high and morally vigorous level they will have influence in gradually but surely persuading to the end in view, and in making a new and wholesome atmosphere. The equipment, too, must be kept wholly for this use. To announce by this means some social feature of the church, or a financial enterprise of the church, will neutralize the whole after effect.

It is remarkable what far-reaching and significant ideas can be expressed in a few words, if pains be taken with the wording. And by this means impression may be made upon the same person several times during the few days the text is displayed. Keep this up month after month, giving the mighty truth a varied emphasis, and some good impression is made. If the confirmed negligent are not persuaded, those who have



hitherto been irregular in their attendance will be persuaded, and the rising generation will come to have a keen conscience in the matter. Just as the merchant builds up his standing in business — here a little and there a little, and years at it, this practise comes to be the very foundation of his success. And the church has a greater chance, because so much has already been done. The church is still an honored institution. And the soul ever has its needs. No power of the gospel has been rendered void. With appeal made, many a man will fight over again with himself the issue, and with the weapons placed to his hand some will win. And just as the congregation the smaller it gets, the still smaller it grows, so the congregation the larger it becomes, the still larger it tends to be. So the main thing is to turn the tide.

In our experience it was found that shopkeepers were never unwilling to give place in their windows to the neatly-

framed texts in this interest. It gives a certain dignity to the shop to be even thus identified with the church and religion; it associates the store with the church in the minds of the church people in particular, and shows the interest of the management in the enterprise — all of advantage rather than otherwise to the store. In our experience it happened that two stores side by side were even jealous, each of the other, of this preferment; of course in no unpleasant way. But it showed more than a willingness to grant a favor.

It will be of material advantage if the display can be placed in the windows of shops with the best name, whose leading men are church attendants — though this is only preferable — or are men of high standing in the community. Something is gained by having these men identified in the minds of people with the interest. They give a tacit endorsement of the sentiment of the display, and add something to its weight.

Ofttimes an interior public place where many people come and go, especially if they have a time to wait, is a more advantageous place for the display than a window. In rural communities the post-office or general store; in cities an office building, elevator, or lobby, or large store; and where possible the electric cars, if vertical end space — best position — can be had; and shop and mill offices, where men in considerable numbers pass, or for a few minutes wait — are all good places for the display.

No outside place would seem to come within the scope of the principles compelling best respect and giving greatest results. In the first place the weather would not permit the use of frames, and without them the display would be so cheapened and brought into a common class, as to lose its distinguishing force. Besides, the display is sure to take on in a few days an unsightly appearance, which somehow would asso-

ciate itself with the interest. And the cards, if used without frames and out of doors, it would not seem important to remove after a few days, and consequently would, from their constant presence, wear themselves out, becoming so much a part of the bulletin-board that no one would longer see them. And upon the whole a certain dignity would be lost.

To create a conscience in regard to church attendance, to which end this plan is directed, should be looked upon not as a temporary expedient, but as a settled policy. It is not medicine quickly to heal a disease: it is food for hunger and supply for recurring need. It is as necessary to vigorous church life as it is to vigorous business life. Conscience touching church-going is not only to be created, it is to be made sensitive, and to be made general, and to be maintained. A church can very well get along without a bell. It now makes as little impression in its realm as the bow and arrow make in war. The present gen-

eration needs a more appealing argument. A bell may still be of use to call the faithful, but it lays no foundation for church-going in reason and conscience. And this is the present great need.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Principle Adapted — Second*

IN line with the same general adaptation of the principle, the validity of which was thoroughly believed in, a small paper was published in the interest of the church and of church attendance. Eight pages, seven and three-eighths by five inches, with a type-page five and one-half by three and five-sixteenth inches, and printed in ten-point type, seemed ample. As it was to be circulated in the homes and not to be brought into the church services we were free to carry advertising. We set apart three pages — second, seventh, and eighth — for this, for which we received two dollars and a half a page. The paper was issued twice a month, being distributed on Friday afternoon or on

Saturday morning, to all the families in our end of the city — we having probably three-fourths of the families — and mailed to such other of our families as were so widely scattered in other sections of the city as not to be conveniently served by carrier. We had six hundred copies printed, at a cost, not including paper, — this being given — of eight dollars. To have them carefully distributed cost one dollar.

Each issue thus involved a net loss of something over a dollar and a half. We were able, too, to make a low rate with the printer, and were fortunate in having the paper given. But with much greater loss the enterprise would have justified itself, considering but the increased receipts in loose change at the church services. A decided increase in pledges for home expenses and for the missionary objects of the church went hand-in-hand with the increase in our congregations, this increase, from a financial point of view alone, making

the net loss involved an unrivaled investment.

As pastor of the church, the writer prepared all copy for the paper, read and corrected the printer's proofs, solicited the advertising, superintended the distributing, and kept the accounts. This work, though somewhat taxing at first, soon came to be taken easily, and was so different from most of my other work as never to be a burden. The items of interest to the community touching the people of the church found their way to me naturally, and selection, when preparing copy, from memoranda made as there was occasion, made the supplying of matter a comparatively easy task. And ordinarily, after the enterprise is established, the business part of the work would be gladly assumed by another.

The paper was meant to be primarily an advocate of church-going. The main feature of every issue was a one-page article — the best that could be extracted or written — in favor of church attend-



ance. To show reasons and grounds for it, the value of it, and to create a new feeling favorable to it, were aimed at. When people do not think for themselves, thinking must be done for them. With so little advocacy of church attendance, and the neglect of worship growing into respectability, the wonder is that congregations have kept up so well.

But that there is not the former conviction of the worth of the church that made the passing generation constant church-goers, anyone can see. The rising generation has not been schooled in the truths and facts and ideals of religion as the former generation was. The church does not occupy the place in the social life of the community that it once did. The place of leadership is not so commonly with the minister as formerly. Domestic religion, too, has declined. A deal of foundation work upon the reasons and grounds and motives of religion has accordingly to be done before this is much changed.

But the strong and constant setting forth of the facts will change it. The foundation of the church is as strong as ever. The need of the church is as great. No part of the gospel has been rendered void. Like religion itself, the church has its worth in itself. But unless there is some education in regard to this matter people will complaisantly and presumptuously neglect their duty. But with the good reasons and grounds shown, and shown persistently, it is likely that as formerly, conscience will respond and bear fruit in a general expectation and a right habit of life.

A small paper, such as has been described, with an open way into the interest of the public because it concerns them and their friends,—is an admirable agency for this propaganda. It can be maintained in that interesting way which insures its being read; it bears its message issue after issue, year after year, and in time the mind it works on comes to be convinced. In time people come

to think and to act in accord with what at first they did no more than sanction. By manifestation of the truth it commends itself to every kind of conscience.

For an illustration take Sunday observance. False and lax views of the day, besides transgressing a more primary law, are responsible for not a little neglect of the services of the church. But who has made it his concern to set the masses right on the matter? The people who go to church do not need the enforcement of the fourth commandment. And their children and their neighbors do not hear the preacher. Only a few families take a religious paper, and the dailies are on the side of a free use of the day. But the foundation of the day is so secure that everything is with him who champions the holy use of it, which is as if the stars fought for him. The building up of a conscience touching the day were fairly quickly possible, were a way to the common conscience open. Because after all,

right and truth and the *ought*, like a great celestial gravitation, are on that side.

The first page of the paper usually contained a short incisive sentiment or epigram bearing upon the worth of religion or of church attendance, much after the manner of our framed cards. This was designed to arrest the attention and especially to claim the will. These were set in uniform type, with plenty of white space, and were of a self-evident or self-justifying character, after the style of the following:

## FIRST CHURCH

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FIRST WEEK IN MAY 1911

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**T**O let what one *likes* to do, master what one *ought* to do, is as if the office-boy should boss the manager.

## FIRST CHURCH

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THIRD WEEK IN JUNE 1911

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ONE does not drift  
into either good-  
ness or badness—  
he chooses it.

## FIRST CHURCH

FIRST WEEK IN APRIL 1911

### The dividing Line

between

poverty and

riches

ignorance and

knowledge

and between

not going to

church and

church-going

is

“I will”

## FIRST CHURCH

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THIRD WEEK IN OCTOBER 1911

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IN following Christ it is the first venture that costs. Once on the way one does not find it harder than other ways. Like the entrance into chilly water, the worst is the plunge.

The danger is that one will shrink from the venture, and that everything will be lost for the simple lack of the courage to begin.



## FIRST CHURCH

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FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER 1911

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AS publicity is required by the State in marriage, and in enlistments in the army — because it helps to hold one to his vow — so for the same reason does the Master require public confession of Him.

While this may well be the direct emphasis of the paper, it may be made to serve this purpose indirectly in a variety of ways. General church interest can be created and maintained, and a closer sympathy and unity fostered in the community. But for some such means hundreds would not even know of the ordinary interests and of any special interests before the church. By the more intimate knowledge of one another, made possible by this means of communication concerning their intimate interests, the people are bound more closely together. More workers are enlisted for the various enterprises, and the community life is more completely organized around the church.

Or a new family has come into the community. Notice to that effect, with a few words about the family, introduces them to the people, claims them before even their own minds for the church, pre-empting them against the claims of other churches, and at once

makes strangers into friends. A great sorrow has befallen — a few words make it a common grief. Two persons have been joined together in marriage. This is a sacred relationship, and against even the current lax feeling it can be lifted up into divineness. One has entered within the veil — some word can be said that will interpret the life, say over the faith concerning death, and assure all friends that they need not let their hearts be troubled. One has come into a great success — let us all rejoice together.

Any enterprise of the church also is afforded a notice and a defense and a plea for itself. Any good service rendered can be noted and praised. A multitude of things for the usefulness of the church and the betterment of the community can be suggested, argued for, and again referred to. Abuses can be condemned and attacked, and hidden evil things brought to light. Wrongdoers can be brought to the judgment seat of the Christian conscience, and the

throne of Christ set up in the midst of any strife and bitterness. Chance is afforded for the application to life of the great Christian principles which, for lack of some strong word, so often lie loose and disconnected as things apart from practical affairs.

With this substantial and virile character given to it, even so small a paper as is indicated will assure itself of a reading, make for itself a place, and help greatly to give the church and its minister their deserved place in the moral leadership of the community.

The paper can easily be too big. In the first place, if it is larger than indicated, it will not be so thoroughly read. And it will not be so well prepared — insignificant and poorly expressed matter will get into it. So small as indicated, it can be read through in a few minutes, and it is likely to be if it is taken up at all. And with so little space available, one is held strictly to careful editing — in every way a gain.

The presence of advertising is not out of keeping with the interest the paper is associated with, as it is never scattered in the pews nor distributed from the church. Advertising is to be solicited on the basis of its bringing to the advertiser a good return on its cost to him, and not on the basis of giving support to a church enterprise. What is solicited is an advertiser's business, and not a contribution. This establishes the enterprise on a secure basis, and makes the proposition one the advertiser will respect. He is simply offered what it is desired to show him is a good investment. Being therefore determined that every advertiser shall get more than an equivalent for his outlay, it is of advantage to carry as little advertising as possible, and that the rate be reasonable.

For the same reason no advertisements that compete with one another should be carried. We have had a contract with a men's clothing store for every

second issue. During this time we have run — either in the issue in which its advertisement appeared or in the issue in which it did not appear — no advertisement of a store of the same kind. We kept out the advertisements of all other grocery stores while we carried the advertisement of one grocery store in every second issue. Our aim was to make the advertising pay the advertiser. If it justifies its cost, more can be charged, and if it does not, no advertiser will continue long.

But under the conditions indicated advertising is almost sure to pay. The enterprise, depending as is generally seen, upon the advertising patronage given it, appeals to the loyalty of the church people, who are ready to do, in support of it, the good turn of patronizing the advertisers. But only once were we tempted to any direct stimulation of this feeling. It is a false and unsubstantial basis. It amounts essentially to a kind of boycott of those who do

not advertise, and the prospective advertiser who detects the emphasis, recognizes the somewhat insecure foundation upon which he is asked to build.

We found it better to take only full-page advertisements. This made fewer points for the interest of the reader to gather round, conserved his attention, and concentrated the actual buying capacity of our constituency.

We mailed copies of the issues to such business men as we hoped to interest — should we find it necessary — in taking our advertising space, and kept them reminded of our policy to accept no competing advertisements. We thus acquainted them with the nature and scope of the enterprise, trusting the facts to make what impression they would.

While it could be desired, in any case where the use of such a paper is contemplated, that it might be self-supporting, it would be a mistake to make this the test of the validity of the plan. It

will be difficult in some places to get such help from advertising as we received. But we could have afforded to bear the cost of the enterprise had we taken no advertisements, so great an improvement did it make in the whole spirit of the church. And from a financial point of view alone, it — even on this basis — would have justified itself, and been a profitable investment. It is this willingness to invest that is the expectation in business. Yet for just the lack of this the church so often is cramped and hindered in its work. To build up a congregation, money may be needed. Not often, however, does a church appropriate money for this purpose. Yet every fairly well-approved outlay would, if made to this end, come back with great interest, and be the gain that makes the church a steadily growing enterprise, and this very fact be the feature that would recover the church to attractiveness in this enterprising age.



## CHAPTER VI

### *Conclusion*

WE have come to look upon these two applications of this valid principle as a permanent part of our church work. Justified by results beyond our expectation, there are many reasons why, as the years go, the results should not be larger and entirely permanent. In this confidence the foregoing has been written. There are of course churches and communities in which the principle could not be so well applied. There are some pastors who could not well apply the principle as indicated. But where conditions do not utterly disfavor, and, in the hands of a wise and discreet pastor, the plan ought to be found adaptable and practicable. Once tried, it will, in greatest likelihood, become a permanent feature of the work

of the church, making effective much other of its work.

The ministry of the plan is to the increasingly great class beyond the reach of the pulpit who, apart from such means, are mostly without the ministry of religion. Many a minister feels today the narrowness of the field in which his work is confined, and longs for the place of leadership to his entire community. Of just this discontent and this hope the foregoing plan was born. Both this discontent and this desire are in many a pastor's heart, and are prophecy of better things. New conditions make imperative new methods and plans, and success may consist just in the fitness with which the waiting though perplexed energy is directed to the existing need. The church is no exception to the operation of this law, but, while rightly conservative, it needs, as do other things human, to take account of the changing world in which it lives, to which it makes its appeal, and of which it is called to make conquest.





BV           Gurting, Henry.  
652.5        High-mark congregations / by Henry Gur  
G8        -- Boston : Worth, 1912.  
            60p. ; 19cm.

1. Church attendance.   I. Title.

